

Teachers' self-esteem and self-efficacy

Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson, Ingibjörg B. Frímannsdóttir and Sigurður Konráðsson
University of Iceland

A web-based questionnaire was sent to all elementary and middle school teachers in Iceland. The population list, with e-mail addresses, was obtained from the teaching union. The teachers were asked to indicate their major, as well as their experience in teaching Icelandic as classroom teachers or subject teachers. They then rated their competence in teaching Icelandic on a scale from 1–10. Responses were received from 1033 elementary and middle school teachers. Of all teachers, 83.9% had taught Icelandic as classroom teachers and 37.3% had taught Icelandic as subject teachers. All teachers rated their competence as high. Statistically, Icelandic majors and older teachers were significantly more efficacious than others in teaching Icelandic. Those with the lowest competence ratings in teaching Icelandic were sports and home studies majors. However, teachers from all majors had taught Icelandic as classroom teachers, and a significant number of them had taught Icelandic as a subject.

Confidence, sense of security, and self-efficacy are all connected to well-being and are likely to be tested when taking on a new job with new demands. It is common to hear people express a sense of insecurity in their work, especially at the beginning of their career. In learning to do a job, it takes time, experience, and knowledge to build a sense of security which increases well-being and certainty in one's standing in the workplace. However, those who live with continuing insecurity in their work are unlikely to experience a sense of contentment. Rather, a sense of uncertainty and inferiority, not conducive to well-being, is more likely to develop.

Those who have taught, whether in grade schools, secondary schools, or colleges, know well how trying it is to feel insecure in their work. Standing in front of demanding students is nothing to look forward to if you are experiencing doubt either about your knowledge of the subject being taught or the ability to communicate that knowledge properly. Some even experience both.

William James (1890, chapter X) defined self-esteem as a sense of one's own worth, deriving it from the ratio of what we can do and what we would like to be able to do. What we would like to do is relative to our values and goals. This definition shows well what is involved in self-esteem—that is, assessment and measurement of our own worth by comparing how we are to what we would like to be. Self-esteem is not formed once and for all; it is constantly being formed by how we assess ourselves in various circumstances, with family, at work, in leisure time and among friends (Carr, 2004, p. 206).

Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson, Department of Education, University of Iceland; Ingibjörg B. Frímannsdóttir, Department of Education, University of Iceland; Professor Sigurður Konráðsson, Department of Education, University of Iceland.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson, University of Iceland, Education, Fannafold 103, Reykjavík, 112 Iceland. E-mail: ria@hi.is

Self-esteem develops in various ways. The first source is probably family and friends (Mruk, 1999, p. 65); however, self-esteem develops throughout our life span and is relative to our successes in terms of what we value. Good self-esteem is related to success in what we do and other people's acceptance of what we do and how we do it. Thus, our self-esteem develops from our assessment of whether we are successful in what we do and how others accept it.

There are consequences to our degree of self-esteem (Mruk, 1999, p. 8). High self-esteem is related to successful adaptation to life events, positive emotions, self-control, ability to accept criticism, and coping with stress, as well as not being overly critical of oneself or others. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is related to worse adaptation and various cognitive problems, such as depression, anxiety, addiction, eating disorders, difficult relationships, less successful stress coping and low immunity function. People with high self-esteem try to uphold it by being successful in what they do, as assessed by themselves and others; however, people with low self-esteem focus on defending themselves from mistakes, humiliation, or rejection. People with high self-esteem focus on their strengths and try to use them to excel, whereas people with low self-esteem focus more on their weaknesses in order to try to rectify them and in this way avoid mistakes (Carr, 2004, p. 208).

People make efforts to avoid failure. If self-esteem is high and people feel that it is threatened, they may do this by being overly sensitive to criticism, by self-promotion through the criticism of others, or by burying themselves in work and responding to criticism with inappropriate attacks. If, on the other hand, self-esteem is low, this may result in depression, anxiety, and social isolation (Mruk, 1999, p. 180).

It is possible to improve self-esteem through various avenues. These include training in what needs to be improved, for example on the job; changing the environment; cognitive treatment; and participating in activities designed to improve self-esteem (Carr, 2004, p. 209). Training in what needs to be improved is conducive to improving self-efficacy, which in turn is conducive to building self-esteem.

Albert Bandura (1997) is among the scholars who have studied these phenomena. According to his theories, self-efficacy is especially important when tackling problems in life and at work. It bears emphasizing that this is not a question of measuring competence; instead, this is a question of believing in one's ability to cope with various problems. Self-efficacy is a belief in one's ability to organize and carry out what is needed in order to achieve important goals. Bandura discussed four main pillars carrying self-efficacy and thereby ability. These pillars are:

- (1) One's own experience of successes;
- (2) Modeling (watching others succeed);
- (3) Persuasion (others persuading us to believe we can succeed);
- (4) Physical and emotional well-being.

Teachers' self-efficacy should be relevant to their everyday well-being, and the higher this self-efficacy is, the more successful their career should be. According to studies in Bandura's book (1997), teachers with a high sense of instructional efficacy work from the idea that it is possible, using effective teaching practices such as specific efforts and correct methods, to help students with learning difficulties to succeed and to have positive effects on their lives. In contrast, teachers with a low sense of instructional efficacy have a tendency to believe that teachers can do little to help low-achieving students. They seem to believe that their attempts to affect the development and learning of such students have little

impact compared to negative effects from their homes and other environments (Bandura, 1997, p. 240).

Studies show that teachers with a high sense of instructional efficacy spend more class time on learning tasks than on other types of tasks, provide students in trouble with the help that they need to succeed, and praise them when the work is done. In contrast, teachers with a low sense of instructional efficacy spend more time than other teachers on tasks other than learning tasks, are quick to give up on slow learners, and reprimand them for their mistakes (Bandura, 1997, p. 241).

Teachers who are low in self-efficacy tend to be authoritarian in their organization of school work. With little attention paid to student motivation, they use rigid disciplinary rules in the classroom and rely on external motivation and negative restrictions to keep students working (Bandura, 1997, p. 241).

Bandura (1997) finds that students do better when they have teachers who are high in self-efficacy than with teachers who doubt their efficacy as teachers. Teachers who are high in self-efficacy tend to believe that they can reach slow learners by using correct methods and by encouraging more work. Teachers who are low in self-efficacy tend to explain low grades in terms of low student ability. Self-efficacy is also relevant to solving problems in the classroom. Teachers who are high in self-efficacy attempt to solve problems immediately. Teachers who are low in self-efficacy, on the other hand, tend to avoid problems and focus inward instead, in order to feel better (Bandura 1997, p. 242).

Other studies indicate a similar pattern to that described by Bandura and his associates. Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, and Kimbrough (2009, p. 74) studied factors contributing to improved self-efficacy of mathematics teachers and found that if teachers had finished four or more courses of mathematics in their graduate studies, their self-efficacy in teaching mathematics was higher than that of those who had studied less. In another study (Vannatta & Fordham, 2004, p. 261), the focus was on the importance of certain factors as regards teachers' use of technology. Although self-efficacy was a factor, the most relevant combination of factors included the amount of training that these teachers had received, their willingness to work beyond the call of duty, and whether they were willing to try innovations. In a study on science teachers who had received training to increase teaching self-efficacy (Roberts, Henson, Tharp, & Moreno, 2000, p. 14), the results showed minimal increases in self-efficacy as a result of training in cases where self-efficacy was already high prior to training. However, in cases where self-efficacy was low prior to training, considerable improvements were shown with increased training. Nugent, Bradshaw, and Kito (1999, p. 231) studied nurses' self-efficacy in relation to teaching others. Self-efficacy was generally high, but formal education and experience in teaching increased it considerably.

Teachers are leaders within classrooms, while outside of the classroom they are colleagues within the institution (Friedman & Kass, 2002, p. 678). Their self-efficacy, in relation to making an impact within the institution and how they relate to their colleagues, is not necessarily on a par with their teaching self-efficacy within the classroom. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the same factors are relevant under different conditions as regards self-efficacy. The best way to assess the importance of self-efficacy is in relation to student achievement. In a study by Guo, Piasta, Justice, & Kaderavek (2010, p. 1099), it was found that children whose teachers had high self-efficacy did better in writing than those whose teachers had lower self-efficacy. However, a difference in vocabulary was not found until the emotional atmosphere in the classroom was studied. Children with teachers

who were high in self-efficacy and had a positive emotional atmosphere in their classrooms had significantly higher vocabulary levels than other children.

International tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate that Icelandic teachers' results are comparable to those from other Nordic countries. For example, results from 2009 (Halldorsson, Olafsson, Nielsson, & Björnsson, 2010, p. 29) show that the reading comprehension of 15-year old students in Iceland is comparable to that of students from the Nordic countries. Norway and Finland, as well as six other countries within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), performed better than Iceland in reading comprehension, indicating room for improvement. In order to make these improvements, it is necessary to know what content is considered important for teacher education. For example, subject knowledge in Icelandic might be one of the important aspects of teacher education. The choice of major reflects the extent of content knowledge in Icelandic received by teachers during their studies. PISA results for Iceland showed similar results for the year 2000 and the year 2009. However, there was a decline in student achievement in 2003 and an even steeper decline in 2006, which was reversed in 2009. One factor in this development might well be the increase in qualified teachers in Icelandic schools after the recession in 2008. In 2006, 14.1% of the workforce in schools was without a teaching license, while in 2009 this figure was only 8.8% (Statistics Iceland, n.d.). This is likely to be due to the fact that after the recession, qualified teachers had fewer employment options beyond teaching.

Teaching is a complex and often difficult job. Newly qualified teachers often have a hard time adjusting to the demands of teaching. They are not always secure in their knowledge that they can do it, and training and experience are often their best tools (Barber & Turner, 2007; Tessier, Sarrazin, & Ntoumains, 2010; Westbrook, Shah, Durrany, Tikly, Khan, & Dunne, 2009). However, it is known that training should include pedagogical content knowledge in order to equip teachers as well as possible for their job (Driel & Berry, 2012; Goldsmith & Phelps, 2010) and to ensure efficient utilization of resources (Crocket, 2007).

As we have discussed, the literature indicates that self-efficacy is relevant to the teaching profession and that teacher training is important in the development of that efficacy. For this reason, our study focused on teacher self-esteem in relation to teaching and teacher education. The study was conducted among grade-school teachers in Iceland using the following research questions:

- What kind of training do Icelandic teachers teaching Icelandic in grade schools have?
- How high is the self-efficacy of Icelandic grade-school teachers for teaching Icelandic?
- How relevant is their training to their level of self-efficacy?

Method

A questionnaire was assembled using the program SurveyMonkey. This is a program developed for distributing questionnaires electronically and for receiving responses in the form of an Excel document, as was the case in this study. The questionnaire was sent through e-mail to current members of the Icelandic Teacher Union, using the member e-mail list. A reminder was sent out four weeks later, which resulted in more responses being collected.

Participants

The questionnaire was sent to around 5000 members of the union of teachers in pre-schools and grade schools. All these individuals are on the union's e-mail list. According to an interview with a person at the office of the Icelandic Teacher Union, a large number of these e-mail addresses are inactive. In this paper, only responses from grade-school teachers will be analyzed.

Responses were received from 1033 grade-school teachers: 116 males, 912 females, and five respondents who did not indicate gender. It is not clear how many e-mail addresses were inactive, so it is difficult to extrapolate the response rate. However, by deducting the responses from the total sum of sent questionnaires, the response rate is around 20%. As this is a very low response rate, the similarity of the sample to the population was explored. Participant age was compared with information from Statistics Iceland (2010) on the age of Icelandic grade-school teachers. As can be seen in Table 1, the differences are minor in most age groups. There were no responses from the youngest and the oldest groups; there are very few people in the youngest group in the population. The mean age both in the sample and in the population falls into the same age group, that of 40–49 years. Both in the population and in the sample there are more women than men, and there were only minor gender differences in the sample.

Most of the participants had teacher licenses (93.5%). In the population, 91.2% were licensed (Statistics Iceland, 2010). The difference is insignificant (2.3%). Most of the participants had received their license from the Teacher University College in Reykjavík (69.6%).

As the sample seems to correspond to the population on important measures and is large enough that the standard error in calculations becomes negligible, it was decided that it would be used in spite of the low response rate.

Measurements

The items in the questionnaire included much of what teachers in grade schools do, as well as their attitudes toward their jobs and education. The focus in this paper is on the following questions. All participants were asked what their major was and which age grades they taught. They were also asked whether they had taught Icelandic as a subject and whether they had taught Icelandic as classroom teachers. They were then asked to assess their competence to teach various aspects of Icelandic as a subject. This was done in the

Table 1
Age of Grade School Teachers in the Sample and in the Population

Age	Sample	Population	Difference between ratios
<24 years	0 (0.0%)	39 (0.8%)	0.8%
25–29 years	72 (7.6%)	371 (7.5%)	0.1%
30–39 years	340 (35.7%)	1383 (27.8%)	7.9%
40–49 years	249 (30.8%)	1446 (29.1%)	1.7%
50–59 years	247 (25.9%)	1303 (26.1%)	0.2%
60+ years	0 (0.0%)	336 (8.7%)	8.7%
Total	954 (100%)	4948 (100%)	0.0%

form of a grade that the teachers assigned to their competence on a scale of 1–10. They responded to questions such as: *How competent do you feel teaching Icelandic literature?* Their responses, on a scale from 0–10, will be explored below.

Results

The answers to the research question pertaining to the education and training of teachers who have taught Icelandic as classroom teachers are presented in Table 2. The answers from subject teachers who have taught Icelandic are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen in Table 2, teachers from all majors have taught Icelandic as classroom teachers. As could be expected, 87.4% of those who majored in Icelandic have taught Icelandic. It bears mentioning, however, that 81.9% of arts and crafts majors have taught Icelandic, as well as 68.2% of sports majors and 72% of home studies majors.

Next, the focus was on those who have taught Icelandic as subject teachers, i.e. in the oldest classes in grade school (grades 8 through 10). Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Teachers Who Have Taught Icelandic as Classroom Teachers, by Their Majors

Major		Taught Icelandic as classroom teachers		
		Yes	No	Total
Icelandic	Number	201	29	230
	%	87.4%	12.6%	100%
Foreign languages	Number	67	17	84
	%	79.8%	20.2%	100%
Science (physics, chemistry, biology, math)	Number	80	17	97
	%	82.5%	17.5%	100%
Social sciences (sociology, theology, history, geol., psych., ed., nature st.)	Number	107	13	120
	%	89.2%	10.8%	100%
Arts and crafts (design, carpentry, textile, art, music)	Number	122	27	149
	%	81.9%	18.1%	100%
Grade school teaching (general teaching, grade school)	Number	12	3	15
	%	80%	20%	100%
Teaching young children	Number	112	7	119
	%	94.1%	5.9%	100%
Sports	Number	30	14	44
	%	68.2%	31.8%	100%
Home studies (home management, craft, cooking)	Number	18	7	25
	%	72%	28%	100%
Other (reading, IT, special ed., phys. ther.)	Number	20	11	31
	%	64.5%	35.5%	100%
No major possible (older students)	Number	18	6	24
	%	75%	25%	100%
Total	Number	787	151	938
	%	83.9%	16.1%	100%

Table 3

Teachers Who Have Taught Icelandic as Subject Teachers, by Major

Major		Taught Icelandic as subject teachers		
		Yes	No	Total
Icelandic	Number	150	83	233
	%	64.4%	35.6%	100%
Foreign languages	Number	31	52	83
	%	37.3%	62.7%	100%
Science (physics, chemistry, biology, math)	Number	36	62	98
	%	36.7%	63.3%	100%
Social sciences (sociology, theology, history, geol., psych., ed., nature st.)	Number	35	86	121
	%	28.9%	71.1%	100%
Arts and crafts (design, carpentry, textile, art, music)	Number	41	106	147
	%	27.9%	72.1%	100%
Grade school teaching (general teaching, grade school)	Number	5	11	16
	%	31.2%	68.8%	100%
Teaching young children	Number	21	93	114
	%	18.4%	81.6%	100%
Sports	Number	13	32	45
	%	28.9%	71.1%	100%
Home studies (home management, craft, cooking)	Number	3	22	25
	%	12%	88%	100%
Other (reading, IT, special ed., phys. ther.)	Number	5	24	29
	%	17.2%	82.8%	100%
No major possible (older students)	Number	9	15	24
	%	37.5%	62.5%	100%
Total	Number	349	586	935
	%	37.3%	62.7%	100%

As is shown in Table 3, teachers from all majors have taught Icelandic as subject teachers. As could be expected, the ratio is highest among Icelandic majors (64.4%). However, it is surprising how high the ratio is among other majors. Again, the ratio of arts and crafts majors bears mentioning, at 27.9%, with sports majors at 28.9% and home studies majors at 12%. The numbers for those ratios are lower than those seen in Table 2 for classroom teachers—this is to be expected, as this is subject teaching, where the teacher's subject knowledge is central.

Teachers Assess Their Own Competence

Teachers were asked to assess their competence to teach Icelandic as a subject on a scale of 1–10 for each aspect of teaching Icelandic. The responses were analyzed by study majors. The means are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows a statistically significant difference in assessment of competence in teaching literature. Those who deemed themselves most competent to teach literature were those who had an Icelandic major. This group also included those who had not been able to choose

Table 4
Mean Grade of Teachers' Assignment of Competence in Teaching Icelandic, By Major

Major	Literature	Grammar	Spelling	Writing	Speaking
Icelandic	8.07	9.42	8.83	8.04	8.26
Foreign languages	7.31	7.80	8.41	7.65	8.07
Science (physics, chemistry, biology, math)	7.10	7.39	7.92	7.27	7.67
Social sciences (sociology, theology, history, geol., psych., ed., nature st.)	7.30	7.41	8.02	7.62	7.98
Arts and crafts (design, carpentry, textile, art, music)	6.96	7.43	7.86	7.47	7.79
Grade school teaching (general teaching, grade school)	7.07	7.87	8.67	8.06	7.94
Teaching young children	7.19	7.60	8.03	7.94	8.02
Sports	6.58	6.93	7.57	6.86	7.18
Home studies (home management, craft, cooking)	6.42	7.00	7.79	7.00	7.92
Other (reading, IT, special ed., phys.ther.)	7.48	7.33	7.93	7.84	7.97
No major possible (older students)	8.08	8.25	8.46	8.08	8.57
Results from ANOVA, *** $p < .001$	$F = 7.90^{***}$	$F = 7.46^{***}$	$F = 6.59^{***}$	$F = 4.70^{***}$	$F = 3.27^{***}$

a major—most likely older students with extensive job experience who had obtained their teaching license before teacher studies were taught at university level. Those who assessed their competence to teach literature as lowest were those who had majored in sports and in home studies. When asked to assess competence to teach Icelandic grammar, the same pattern was revealed, and was also statistically significant. Those who had an Icelandic major and those without majors deemed themselves most competent, and sports and home studies majors deemed themselves least competent. Spelling revealed the exact same pattern, with Icelandic majors and those without a major deeming themselves most competent and sports and home studies teachers deeming themselves least competent. The same pattern was found for writing. The last question was on teaching spoken Icelandic. Again, Icelandic majors and those without majors deemed themselves most competent and sports teachers deemed themselves least competent. Science teachers ranked second-last after the sports teachers, followed by arts and crafts teachers in the antepenultimate position and home studies teachers fourth from last. Thus it seems that the overall pattern for teachers' assessment of their own competence in teaching Icelandic is quite stable across aspects of the subject, according to the classical understanding of those aspects.

Discussion

Looking at the means for these groups, they all seem to assign rather high grades to themselves when asked about their competence in teaching Icelandic as a subject. It therefore seems that teachers in Icelandic schools teaching Icelandic deem themselves capable of doing just that. Despite the fact that teachers from all majors seem to have taught Icelandic,

this teaching does not in all cases reflect their training. Although the ratio of sports teachers and home studies teachers was lower than teachers from other majors, approximately two out of three had taught Icelandic as classroom teachers. The ratio of teachers teaching Icelandic as subject teachers was also lower among majors in sports, home studies, and other subjects than for majors in Icelandic. However, almost one in three sports majors had taught Icelandic as a subject, with somewhat fewer having majors in home studies and subjects other than Icelandic. It therefore seems that teachers from all majors have to be ready to take on the task of teaching Icelandic, certainly as classroom teachers, and in many cases as subject teachers as well. As discussed previously, pedagogical content knowledge in the subject one is supposed to teach is an invaluable tool for teachers, especially for newly qualified teachers, who are often insecure before they acquire some job experience (Barber & Turner, 2007; Crocket, 2007; Driel & Berry, 2012; Goldsmith & Phelps, 2010; Tessier, Sarrazin, & Ntoumains, 2010; Westbrook et al., 2009). Although there is still room for improvement, Icelanders do not do badly in reading comprehension on international tests, such as PISA (Halldorsson et al., 2010, p. 29), in spite of a discrepancy between training and subject teaching. Therefore, although more teachers have teacher training than was previously the case, it seems that one has to look into the content of this training in order to seek improvement in our scores.

An interesting pattern emerged when the teachers were asked to rate their competence as teachers of Icelandic, when considering the real possibility that this would be what they would have to do. This competence was very clearly rated by major, with the exact same pattern emerging for all aspects of Icelandic language teaching. Sports and home studies majors were, in most cases, those who deemed themselves least capable of taking on this task. There seems to be a rhyme and reason to decisions related to selecting majors in their training. Those finding themselves best equipped to deal with questions on Icelandic choose that major, and those less certain of their competence in this aspect choose other majors that hold their interest better, quite logically. However, it appears that the reality of their situation is such that they might have to teach this subject anyway. Not surprisingly, classroom teachers with majors other than Icelandic will be expected, at some point in their careers, to teach their students the required amount of Icelandic. However, what is surprising is the number of teachers with majors other than Icelandic who are teaching Icelandic in the upper grades as a subject, some of whom deem themselves not quite competent to do so. It is therefore fortunate that most of them show quite a high level of self-efficacy for the job, since they seem to be required to teach Icelandic anyway.

The pattern of self-efficacy appears to reflect the pattern of teacher training that these teachers have obtained. It therefore seems that training is quite pertinent to the self-efficacy of teachers, at least when it comes to teaching Icelandic in the classroom or as a subject in the upper grades. When looking at the tables above, we find that 83.9% of all teachers teach Icelandic as classroom teachers and 37.3% teach it as a subject—far more than the number of those with a major in Icelandic.

As was discussed above, our self-esteem does not emerge fully formed: It develops in relation to our life and work and it is colored by the way we assess ourselves, in our jobs as well as elsewhere (Carr, 2004). High self-esteem is related to positive emotions, high self-regulation, ability to accept criticism, ability to cope with stress, and a tendency not to be overly critical of oneself or others. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is related to depression, anxiety, problems with addictions and eating disorders, problems in relationships, difficulty coping with stress, and problems with immune-system function.

According to Bandura (1997, pp. 240–242), teachers who are low in self-efficacy tend to be unconfident about their ability to help low achievers and blame their condition on the home and environment. In addition, they spend class time on tasks other than learning tasks, they are quick to give up on slower students, and they scold them for mistakes. They organize their work according to authoritarian lines, rigid rules, and external motivation. They justify low achievement with low ability, and they avoid problems and focus on lightening their own emotional load.

More recent studies show that teachers' education and training are of the utmost importance with respect to teachers' self-esteem (Friedman & Kass, 2002; Guo et al., 2010; Nugent et al., 1999; Roberts et al., 2000; Swackhamer et al., 2009; Vannatta & Fordham, 2004). In addition, one of those studies (Guo et al., 2010) showed that a positive atmosphere in the classroom positively affects achievement. These studies are in concert with the results shown above. Those who deem themselves least confident in teaching Icelandic are those who have less education in the subject than others. This should not come as a surprise. What is surprising is that many of those teachers teach Icelandic anyway. According to James (1890), Bandura (1997), Mruk (1999), and Carr (2004), one could conclude that this is not good for teacher self-esteem or self-efficacy.

It is of the utmost importance for schoolwork that teachers are confident about their competence to teach what they are teaching. A positive atmosphere in the classrooms, where the teachers do their job confidently and contentedly, is also a factor in student achievement, according to Guo et al. (2010). Icelandic is allocated more classroom hours than other subjects. Placing teachers who are unsure of themselves and who indicate low self-efficacy and low self-esteem in roles for which they do not have adequate training courts the danger of more hours of misery for both teachers and students in Icelandic teaching and learning—more so than in other subjects.

Conclusion

As teaching is our pathway to the future, we need to qualify teachers for their jobs as best we can. Teaching Icelandic is important for a small nation that uses a language considered a minority within the sea of languages. We have managed to maintain this language for 12 centuries, but if schools fail to ensure effective student acquisition of Icelandic, the risk of extinction could arise surprisingly quickly. Icelandic is a difficult language, with many rules and numerous exceptions to those rules; thus, it is not at all easy to master or to know how to teach it. Therefore, it is alarming to discover that many of the teachers teaching Icelandic in our compulsory schools do not feel adequately trained for the job. Furthermore, a significant number of teachers have not received substantial training in Icelandic as part of their teaching studies. Despite this, they are often asked to teach Icelandic to students—particularly as classroom teachers for younger students but, as our study shows, also as subject teachers for the older grades.

What would be an optimum solution for such a scenario? One obvious approach would be to have only those teachers who have majored in Icelandic teaching Icelandic, at least as subject teachers for the older grades. However, this does not appear to be a realistic solution for the current situation in Iceland. Therefore, the suggestion that we propose, based on the findings presented in this study, is that all teachers receive at least basic training in Icelandic as a subject before leaving their teaching institution. This should ensure that they are able to face the demands held by the reality of their future workplace.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy. The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman and Company, New York.
- Barbara, N., & Turner, M. (2007). Even while they teach, newly qualified teachers learn. *British Journal of Special Education*, 34(1), 33–39.
- Carr, A. (2004). *Positive psychology: The science of happiness and human strengths*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Crocket, M. (2007). Teacher professional development as a critical resource in school reform. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 39(3), 253–263.
- Driel, J. H., & Berry, A. (2012). Teacher professional development focusing on pedagogical content knowledge. *Educational Researcher*, 41(1), 26–28.
- Friedman, I. A., & Kass, E. (2002). Teacher self-efficacy: A classroom-organization conceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 675–686.
- Goldsmith, P., & Phelps, G. (2010). Does teacher professional development affect content and pedagogical knowledge: How much and for how long? *Economics of Education Review*, 29(3), 432–439.
- Guo, Y., Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2010). Relations among preschool teachers' self-efficacy, classroom quality, and children's language and literacy gains. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1094–1103.
- Hagstofa Íslands (2010). *Grunnskólar* [Grade schools]. Retrieved 27 July 2012 from <http://www.hagstofa.is/Pages/79>
- Halldorsson, A. M., Olafsson, R. F., Nielsson, O. H., & Bjornsson, J. K. (2010). *Íslenskir nemendur við lok grunnskólans: Helstu niðurstöður PISA 2009 rannsóknarinnar um lesskilning og læsi í stærðfræði og náttúrufræði*. [Icelandic students at the end of grade school: Main results from PISA 2009 study on reading comprehension and reading in mathematics and science]. Reykjavík: Námsmatsstofnun, Retrieved 21 August 2012 from http://www.namsmat.is/vefur/rannsoknir/PISA_2009/pisa_2009_island.pdf
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. New York: Holt.
- Mruk, C. (1999). *Self-esteem* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.
- Nugent, K. E., Bradshaw, M. J., & Kito, N. (1999). Teacher self-efficacy in new nurse educators. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 15(4), 229–237.
- Roberts, J. K., Henson, R. K., Tharp, B. Z., & Moreno, N. (2000, January). An examination of change in teacher self-efficacy beliefs in science education base don the duration of inservice activities, Paper presented at a conference held by Southwest Educational Research Association, Dallas, Texas.
- Statistics Iceland (n.d.). *Education*. Retrieved 22 August 2012 from <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Education/Compulsory-schools>.
- SurveyMonkey (n.d.). *SurveyMonkey – The easiest way to get the answers you need*. Retrieved 21 January 2009 from <http://www.surveymonkey.com>.
- Swackhamer, L. E., Koellner, K., Basile, C., & Kimbrough, D. (2009). Increasing the self-efficacy of inservice teachers through content knowledge. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 63–78.
- Tessier, D., Sarrazin, P., & Ntoumanis, N. (2010). The effect of an intervention to improve newly qualified teachers' interpersonal style, students' motivation and psychological need satisfaction in sport-based physical education. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 35(4), 242–253.
- Vannatta, R. A., & Fordham, N. (2004). Teacher dispositions as predictors of classroom technology use. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 253–271.
- Westbrook, J., Shah, N., Durrani, N., Tikly, C., Wasim, K., & Dunne, M. (2009). Becoming a teacher: Transition from training to the classroom in the MWFP in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29(4), 437–444.

Copyright of Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.